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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: Colombia's efforts towards enhancing security of radioactive materials

Summary: Officials from the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) Office of Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation visited Colombia to evaluate its radioactive security program. NNSA was pleased with the security upgrades made at the Ingeominas repository and formulated a construction plan to make the facility a centralized repository for all disused and orphaned radioactive waste in Colombia. Although NNSA applauded the GOC's progress, it noted locations where radioactive materials needed to be better secured. End Summary.

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Ingeominas Storage Facility Security Upgrade  
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1. The NNSA and the Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME) previously agreed to allocate USD 36,000 towards enhancing the radioactive material repository at the Colombian Institute of Geology and Mining (Ingeominas). The goal of the partnership is to improve Colombia's radioactive material security by providing enhanced protection of Ingeominas's facilities. In the first phase of the project, the NNSA awarded USD 18,000 to Ingeominas for the purchase of cameras and lights to improve surveillance and improved locks to better secure the radioactive material. The NNSA will award the remaining USD 18,000 under phase two of the project when the MME provides a final report detailing Ingeominas's security upgrades.

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Plan to Increase Ingeominas's Storage Capacity  
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2. Officials from the NNSA discussed with the GOC their plan to fund a project to enhance Ingeominas's radioactive storage capacity. The repository will be upgraded with additional space and enhanced security features, allowing Ingeominas to become the central repository facility for all disused and orphaned radioactive waste in Colombia. The total cost of the project will range from USD 250,000 to USD 600,000 and will be funded by the NNSA in installments. Construction materials will be paid for in advance, while labor costs will be paid at the completion of each phase. NNSA officials estimate that actual construction could begin as early as April 1, 2006. The NNSA has previously funded five or six similar projects worldwide.

3. NNSA officials stressed to the MME that construction on the Ingeominas site should begin as soon as possible. The NNSA expects a reduction in its 2006 fiscal budget and will most likely continue funding those projects whose leadership has proven to be responsive and proactive.

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Insecure Radioactive Material  
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4. The NNSA identified five sites in Colombia containing disused, orphaned, or abandoned radioactive material that is improperly secured. Liability concerns will preclude the NNSA from providing resources for the physical transportation of the radioactive material. However, it offered to fund the bulk of the transfer costs, including packing, unpacking, loading, and unloading. Although the MME stated there is currently no room to store the material at Ingeominas's facilities, as presently configured, the NNSA stressed the importance of securing this potentially dangerous material. The MME assured the NNSA it would look into how best to secure the material.

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